

# **TOWARDS INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS AND ENHANCED LEARNING**

**A SYNTHESIS OF CASE STUDY FINDINGS FROM  
DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**

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Paris, 2009

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# Preface

This publication is based on an analysis of sixteen case studies from as many countries drawn from different parts of the world. The publication attempts to synthesize the lessons emerging from the case studies. Considering that the case studies have been conducted in very diverse contexts, and refer to innovative efforts in different systemic conditions, no attempt is made to draw generalizations. Rather, the purpose of the synthesis is to collate critical messages derived from various experiences for making schools more accessible and inclusive. It also considers the participation in schooling and learning as to be more meaningful to children since it is contributing to their overall development in general, and to cognitive development in particular.

The research case studies, conducted over the last academic year (2007–2008), are intended to give indications and propose reflections for guidance on programme development and implementation. They should help identify good practices, particularly in countries/regions where schools function in resource-constrained environments, and they should carry out comprehensive studies based on such practices.

A particular focus is given to the theme of inclusive schools and enhanced learning – a concept that looks beyond mere enrolment and attendance to ensuring that every individual is enabled to acquire basic competencies and life skills in the short term, and become a lifelong learner over the long term.

This publication also responds to the need expressed in international forums – in order to set up a framework for knowledge translation in education from research to practice within a comprehensive manner. It is suggested that this framework has to include various aspects, such as policy-making, curriculum formulation, teacher training, assessment and testing; it is also necessary to learn continuously from research studies focusing on preconditions and contextual factors that improve the learning environment, in order to achieve the above mentioned.

This paper – a synthesis of sixteen case studies – will be discussed during the second experts' meeting to be held in UNESCO, Paris (7-9 December 2009), at which participants will analyse factors that contributed to the learning, and will discuss policies and strategies to enhance quality learning and inclusion in basic education.

*Quality must be seen in light of how societies define the purpose of education. In most, two principal objectives are at stake: the first is to ensure the cognitive development of learners. The second emphasizes the role of education in nurturing the creative and emotional growth of learners and in helping them to acquire values and attitudes for responsible citizenship. Finally, quality must pass the test of equity: an education system characterized by discrimination against any particular group is not fulfilling its mission.*

*Education for All: The Quality Imperative,*  
EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005,  
UNESCO, Paris, 2004

# 1. Introduction

The World Declaration on Education for All, adopted at the Jomtien Conference in 1990, recognized that a huge proportion of children and young persons continued to be outside the purview of education. The world had nearly a billion illiterate persons; around one-sixth of school-age children were not enrolled at school. The number was staggering. Recognizing the enormity of the task involved, the World Declaration set out to rectify this anomaly by focusing on getting all children enrolled in schools. Provision of basic education was seen as the means of meeting the ‘basic learning needs’ of all. Correspondingly, basic education came to be viewed as a basic right of every individual. In fact, this was a reiteration of the commitment made in the Human Rights Framework, which specifies education as a basic human right. This was further reinforced in more concrete terms in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (Article 29), which further specified the purpose of education as ‘the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential’. In fact, the value of creating an inclusive system of basic education for overall human progress and development has continued to be highlighted in all subsequent international policy documents. For instance, the Salamanca Declaration in 1994 stated that one of the greatest problems facing the world was that a growing number of persons remained excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities due to non-inclusive education systems. Such a society is neither efficient nor safe.<sup>1</sup> Further, UNESCO and the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1999) identified education as ‘the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain means to participate fully in their communities.’<sup>2</sup> The perspective was reinforced by the inclusion of education and gender equality goals as part of the development agenda for the new millennium under the ‘Millennium Development Goals’ framework.

With this new ‘rights’ perspective in place, along with the recognition of the critical role of education in overall development efforts, all countries are geared up by designing new strategies to make school education more accessible to all, and to bring more and more children into schools. New aid agendas were also drawn up by multilateral and bilateral development agencies. The strategies indeed began to yield results as the 1990s witnessed a huge enrolment increase in almost all countries. The number of people without access to basic education began to fall. Yet the subsequent conference at Dakar, a decade later, opened with a sober note that the task was far from over. Two major points emerged from the national and international reviews carried out in

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, Paris, UNESCO, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO and the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Right to Education: Scope and Implementation*, Paris, UNESCO, 1999.

preparation to the Dakar Conference. First, intra country disparities have remained quite glaring. Even while the average figures at national level showed improvement, specific regions and groups of population remain excluded from the benefit of basic education provisions. Girls, in particular, have continued to face serious barriers in accessing basic education. Second, the situation (with respect to those who manage to enrol in schools) also called for closer examination. A large number of children who begin their schooling fail to complete even the primary cycle of schooling. Quality of schooling has remained a serious issue; countries that have remained busy in building an infrastructure to accommodate new enrolment appeared to have given little attention to the issues of learning achievement. It is in this context that the Dakar Declaration Framework for Action 2000 specifically called for emphasizing the need for building an inclusive system of schooling that effectively bring the disadvantaged and traditionally excluded groups of children into the folds of schooling. The framework also explicitly called for focusing attention on enhancing learning by improving the quality of provisions and processes made available at all levels of education.

Progress during the post-Dakar period is being carefully assessed by the annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports. Focus on funding poorer countries (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa) has intensified with new strategies, such as the Fast Track Initiative. One can observe that there is progress across the board. Enrolments are surging everywhere. The number of children without access to basic education, and those remaining that have never enrolled in primary schools, have begun to decrease. The number of countries identified as at serious risk of not achieving the EFA targets is gradually decreasing. With this positive trend in enrolment, attention is shifting to what happens to children who are enrolled in schools. Do they complete the full cycle of basic education? Who are those who complete basic education and benefit from their participation in schooling? Have children from the marginalized groups in different countries been able to benefit equally from schooling?

International and regional assessments, and a growing number of national assessments conducted since 1999, show that poor learning outcomes in language, mathematics and other subjects still characterize many countries worldwide. More than 60 percent of countries allocate fewer than 800 yearly hours of instruction in grades 1–6, even though recent research confirms positive correlations between instructional time and learning outcomes. Many developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, have crowded classrooms, poor school infrastructure and inadequate learning environments. Acute shortage of teachers is common, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, and even greater shortages of trained teachers in some countries restrict quality teaching and learning. Recent research confirms the developmental benefits of expanding education systems, but points to a need for complementary policies to offset inequality and improve learning.<sup>3</sup> The quality of education throughout the world is increasingly perceived as the pervasive issue. Systematic assessments of learning outcomes, which have become more frequent in recent years, show problematically low and/or unequal levels of learning in most countries. Although the proportion of an age cohort entering the first grade of primary education is high, or has increased in most developing countries, many children do not complete the primary cycle and even fewer master basic literacy and numeracy skills.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008: Education for All by 2015. Will We Make It?* Paris, UNESCO, 2007, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.13.

## 2. Inclusive schools and enhanced learning: cornerstones of quality EFA

There is increased recognition that equity in education and quality of education cannot be treated in two different compartments. There is not much value in increasing enrolment of children if it leaves out the most marginalized. It is equally important that the quality of education offered in schools is raised to acceptable standards. Thus, providing quality education for all requires, on the one hand, making education inclusive by bringing the children of marginalized groups into the folds of schooling and enhancing the quality of schooling offered – with particular focus on improving learning outcomes, on the other. Translated into operational terms: (a) promoting inclusive schooling; and (b) ensuring enhanced learning levels have become the cornerstones of achieving the goals of quality Education for All. That inclusive schooling and enhanced learning levels should not be seen in isolation is emphatically brought out by the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) on Mid-Term Assessment of EFA:

The evidence suggests that the issue of quality in education is gaining the attention of many stakeholders worldwide: national governments, international partners, school authorities and parents. Discussions, reports and assessments of education quality have proliferated in recent years. Despite this growing interest, the accumulated evidence points to the prevalence of weak pupil performance, widespread learning disparities, insufficient instructional time and high dropout rates in many countries, both developed and developing. Disparities in learning outcomes, while having narrowed between girls and boys in many contexts, remain significant among other groups, to the disadvantage of poor, rural, urban slum, marginalized indigenous and minority pupils.<sup>5</sup>

Concern about inclusion has evolved from a struggle on behalf of children ‘having special needs’ into one that challenges all exclusionary policies and practices in education as they relate to curriculum, culture and local centres of learning. Instead of focusing on preparing children to fit into existing schools, the new emphasis focuses on preparing schools so that they can deliberately reach out to all children. It also recognizes that gains in access have not always been

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 183.



accompanied by increases in quality.<sup>6</sup> It is premised on the principle that inclusive schooling would aspire to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitudes and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability; it is based on the conviction that education is a basic human right and forms the foundation of a more just society. It is in this context that building ‘inclusive schools’ becomes a cornerstone of EFA where inclusion means encompassing: (a) the marginalized and disadvantaged, whether they be poor, rural and urban slum residents, ethnic and linguistic minorities, or the disabled; (b) all age groups, from early childhood (ECCE) to adults (especially literacy); and (c) girls and women.<sup>7</sup>

The inclusion-exclusion phenomenon with respect to basic schooling is more complex than simply bringing all children to school. It is necessary to recognize that children who fail to benefit from formal school education do not constitute a monolithic group. For some of these children, school is genuinely outside their reach in physical terms. Others fail to attend school, even if it is available in the neighbourhood, due to social and economic reasons. Some attend school, but never physically participate in the education process. Yet, others leave school without completing even the lower primary cycle of five years. There are some who are officially on the school rolls but precariously placed; they remain largely absent and are unable to benefit from the schooling process. There are also those who complete the schooling in physical terms, but hardly benefit in terms of acquiring cognitive capabilities. It is obvious that one cannot place all these children in a single basket as failing to benefit from school. Rather, one may wonder whether it is children who are failing to benefit, or is it indeed the school system that is failing to teach education to the children? Without sounding polemical, one could say that there is more to school participation than merely counting who is in or out of school.<sup>8</sup> While excluded children, who physically remain outside the folds of schooling, are visible and counted, those who attend the schools (but remain virtually excluded as they do not acquire even basic learning competencies) remain silent and invisible. Indeed, this number is not small; rather, the number of such children as indicated by several achievement surveys is larger than the number of those physically excluded. In fact, such children face double exclusion. Without acquiring basic learning competencies, they are unable to move up in the school ladder and are compelled to abandon their aspirations for higher levels of formal education; at the same time, having attended formal schools, many families and communities would consider them misfit to perform traditional occupational tasks often involving manual work. It is this perspective that makes ‘enhancing learning’ in schools the second ‘cornerstone’ of achieving EFA goals.

Enhancing learning is often equated with increasing examination performance. This in turn, has led to oversimplification of the task involved as limited to measuring achievement through large-scale testing. It is important to recognize that the enhancement agenda is not simply about getting children to perform better in examinations: it is about getting them to feel better – more motivated, more confident, happier – and about the idea that feeling good in these ways leads to success at school, and in life generally.<sup>9</sup> Pursuing the enhancement agenda would, no doubt,

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<sup>6</sup> UNESCO, *World Education Forum Final Report: Part II. Improving the Quality and Equity of Education for All*, Paris, UNESCO, 2000, p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008: Education for All by 2015. Will We Make It?* Paris, UNESCO, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> R. Govinda and M. Badhyopadhyay, *Access to Elementary Education in India: Country Analytical Review*, CREATE Project, NUEPA, New Delhi, 2008. See also Keith Lewin, *Improving Access, Equity and Transitions in Education: Creating a Research Agenda*, for an elaboration of the conceptual model on ‘zones of exclusion’.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth Cigman, ‘Enhancing Children’, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 42, No. 3–4, 2008.

involve measuring learning levels. However, that is only part of the means and not an end in itself. Transforming the personality of the child in a holistic manner would entail attending not only to cognitive but also social and emotional aspects of their growth process. Schools have to identify the social and emotional aspects of learning as a key focus for their work with the children. It is necessary to recognize that the factors holding back learning in their setting include children's difficulties in understanding and managing their feelings, working co-operatively in groups, motivating themselves and demonstrating resilience in the face of setbacks.<sup>10</sup>

Effective practices in inclusion, as well as in implementing an agenda of learning enhancement, cannot therefore be examined in isolation. At the centre of both of these is the requirement that schools perform better by imbibing a culture of inclusion, and pursuing 'children's learning' as a matter of right for every child – not just a desirable by-product of schooling. The core of such an effort includes how teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the student's role in learning, and how these ideas about knowledge and learning are manifested in teaching and class work. The 'core' also includes structural arrangements of schools, such as the physical layout of classrooms, student grouping practices, teachers' responsibilities for groups of students, and relations among teachers in their work with students, as well as processes for assessing student learning and communicating it to students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other interested parties. One lesson we have learned from the past decade of systemic school improvement efforts is that student diversity in the classroom is not a liability but an asset in any attempt to enhance overall learning levels. Clearly, there are some beliefs and practices that support the inclusion of more student diversity and others that do not.<sup>11</sup> This is very clearly spelt out in the Salamanca Statement, adopted at the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca:

Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the more effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.<sup>12</sup>

In other words, making schools and school systems more inclusive involves: (a) the process of increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the curricula, cultures and communities of local schools; (b) restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in their locality; and (c) the presence, participation and achievement of all students vulnerable to exclusionary pressures, not only those with impairments or those who are categorized as 'having special educational needs'.<sup>13</sup> It is in this perspective that the 2005 Global Monitoring Report, *Education for All: The Quality Imperative*, has highlighted the fact that many developing countries face a double challenge of increasing enrolment while improving the functioning of schools. The report advocated policies designed to: (a) produce steady investment in the teaching profession (in terms of numbers and training); (b) guarantee 850 to 1,000 hours of learning per year for all primary pupils; (c) improve

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<sup>10</sup> United Kingdom, Department for Education and Skills, Excellence and Learning: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning, 2005. Available at: <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/banda/seal/>

<sup>11</sup> Dianne L. Ferguson, 'International Trends in Inclusive Education: the Continuing Challenge to Teach Each One and Everyone', *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2008, pp. 109-120.

<sup>12</sup> UNESCO, *The Salamanca Statement* . . . , op cit., p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Mel Ainscow and Susie Miles, 'Making Education for All Inclusive: Where Next?' *Prospects*, Vol. 38, 2008, p. 15-34.

acquisition of reading skills; (d) renew pedagogy, emphasizing structured teaching, i.e. a combination of direct instruction, guided practice and independent learning in a child-friendly environment; (e) increase the availability of textbooks and other learning materials and of facilities (clean water, sanitation, access for disabled students); and (f) promote autonomous leadership at the school level.

Looking across, one would find a variety of practices (both at the systemic level and school level) that tend to support a transformative agenda that makes school inclusive, and at the same time contributing to increased levels of learning among children. It is with the objective of identifying and documenting such practices that UNESCO supported the conduct of a number of case studies in different countries that focus on practices related to inclusion and enhanced learning in schools. The present publication attempts to give an overview of the case studies and identify broad lessons that could help transform schools into more inclusive and effective schools.

### 3. Overview of case studies

Policy documents and large-scale studies provide us with broad generalizations or principles delineating interaction among factors that influence or determine the nature of school systems that are more inclusive and are more effective in producing higher levels of learning achievement among children. These principles, no doubt, act as guideposts for designing different aspects of school systems and improving their quality. Case studies, in contrast, look for experiences that attempt to adopt or adapt these principles in an effective manner to produce schools and classrooms that are inclusive and those contributing to enhancement of learning among children. These experiences cannot necessarily be generalized, but are invaluable in shaping the practice of education. Case studies are concerned with devising specific processes in a contextualized manner and finding optimum ways in which aims of inclusion and enhanced learning could be met. They focus on finding alternative forms of delivery, curriculum design, pedagogy, incentives, etc., that work best *within each country, each locality or even each school*. Such efforts would allow for constructing unique solutions to endemic problems. The emphasis would be on the local context and culture, within which those with local knowledge can construct their aims rather than rely upon common yardsticks implemented from a global perspective.<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, knowledge derived from case studies will have to be understood and interpreted in a contextualized manner. This is precisely what the present chapter attempts to do.

As mentioned earlier, the case studies under consideration in this publication are from sixteen countries/regions that are very diverse, even though the subjects of investigation are common, focusing on either inclusion practices or efforts to enhance learning achievement, or both. Keeping this in view, and in order to facilitate a better understanding of the synthesized lessons derived from the case studies, a brief overview of the case study or case studies of various countries is given in this chapter. As one can see, many of the case studies focus on programmes and processes pursued in specific institutions as exemplars of good practice; others analyse specific programmes or projects dealing with the subject of inclusion or learning improvement; and a few others highlight system-level initiatives that intend to strengthen inclusion practices or practices that enhance student learning in schools.

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<sup>14</sup> Harvey Goldstein, 'Education for All: The Globalization of Learning Targets', *Comparative Education*, Vol. 40, No. 1, February 2004.

## **Institutional case studies**

There has been a vigorous advocacy for educating all children in the same schools, irrespective of their physically or mentally challenged conditions, under the rubric of ‘Integrated Education of the Disabled’. Is there no place for special schools at all? Some argue that such segregated special schools are relevant only in the case of children with severe disabilities. However, most countries continue to have special schools. The two school case studies presented from **Angola** belong to this category, while the third one is a case of an integrated school. The three schools were studied with a view to identifying strengths and weaknesses of the institutions and recommending concrete measures to improve their performance. Two of the selected institutions were special centres dealing with children with special needs, while one was an integrated school whereby two-thirds of the children have special needs. Another institution studied is a large complex called the ‘Education Complex for Special Education of Luanda’, with thirty-six classrooms and fifty-six mixed classes covering learners in the age range of 3 to 35 years. The education complex deals with a variety of special needs including hearing impairment, mental and language problems. Grade levels covered include pre-primary and primary education up to secondary education, catering for a total of 1,062 learners.

**Chile** presents practices of inclusion in two school case studies – one at a school in an urban marginal context in Santiago, and another at a school in a rural-indigenous context in Toconao, near San Pedro de Atacama. The studies are conducted on the hypothesis that schools with inclusive practices improve their students’ learning. It is in order to demonstrate this point that two schools were selected, which, despite being located in unfavourable contexts, develop inclusive practices and obtain good academic results. The study has developed and used the ‘Index for Inclusion’ in order to describe the inclusive practices adopted in these schools.

There are three institutional case studies from **Egypt**. The case studies especially focus on the innovative efforts of selected teachers to enhance learning levels. The case study selected at the kindergarten level is a private language school. At the preparatory level, the case study is from a school where the history teacher was able to change the traditional method of teaching into a project-based activity. Another case study tells the story of a home economics teacher, who was studying for her Ph.D. at the university. She could successfully apply what she was learning in new trends in curriculum and methods of teaching to help her students at the preparatory school level.

**Estonia** presents an analytical study of three schools to illustrate effective practices in inclusive education. The chosen case studies illustrate effective practice through cases of individual children, and how they have benefited from the pedagogic practices adopted in the schools. One of the case studies also focuses on the nature of a support system for teaching blind children.

The case study from **France** presents a detailed account of pedagogic and organizational practices adopted for improving educational attainment in a school located in difficult social surroundings. This has been illustrated through the application of the Freinet teaching method at the ‘Concorde’ school in Mons-en-Baroeul (Département du Nord). This case study of innovative school functioning is premised on the ‘rejection of social inevitability’, as the experiment is being carried out in disadvantaged suburbs of Lille – burdened for many years by a whole range of

economic and social problems. The educational approach and the teachers involved remain committed to the idea that learning by students should be non-compartmentalized, and that the development learning programmes should exploit the possibilities of group participation and collaborative learning.

The report from **Morocco** presents a study of eight schools – four primary and four secondary. Both urban and rural schools were included, as well as privately and publicly managed schools. The objective of the study was to explore the hypothesis that certain factors in and outside the school tend to promote and improve learning and excellence in schools. Specifically it focuses on three questions: What are the most important requirements for the enhancement of learning within and outside the school? Which requirements have the greatest impact upon learning enhancement? Which implementation measures and procedures are effective in overcoming difficulties and barriers to enhancing learning within and outside the school?

The **Oman** study dealt with two basic schools implementing the ‘Child Centred Education Project’. Both schools were mixed-gender schools with female staff covering the basic school cycle. The project aimed to enhance broader aims of basic education, apart from emphasizing improved learning levels. It was especially concerned with student personality aspects and equipping students with life skills: necessary for improving their quality of life, and developing communication and self-learning competencies and other related skills.

The case study from **Peru** is about the systematization of a bilingual intercultural education experience, ‘Learning to Read and Write in Andean Knowledge’, developed in a school in Paropata, Canchas province. The study describes how the school has incorporated Andean knowledge in curricular programming and in the classroom, producing changes and improvements in the processes of learning reading and writing in primary school students. The educational innovation is based on the opening of the school to the community converting Andean cultural knowledge into an occasion for learning. Essentially, this meant effective contextualization of teaching–learning, facilitating the children to learn from what they know, and what they wish for; that is, learning from their particular perspective of life and the world.

## Case studies of programmes and projects

The case study from the **Caribbean region**, entitled ‘Enhanced Learning in the English Speaking Caribbean’, deals with three selected project implementation experiences. The three selected experiences are: (a) the ‘Expanding Educational Horizons’ programme, which aimed to improve reading and mathematics learning levels, developed in seventy-one schools in Jamaica and involving six NGOs, which was being implemented by the Ministry of Education with support from USAID; (b) the ‘Servol Hi Tech Centres’ programme that focused on imparting digital literacy to secondary school students (the programme was developed at national level in Trinidad and Tobago and funded by the Inter-American Development Bank); and (c) the ‘Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CCETT)’ programme focused on capacity-building of primary education teachers in eight Caribbean countries (Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago). The programme is designed to improve the standards of literacy and numeracy in primary schools and students of non-governmental organizations through innovative teaching–learning strategies for literacy and

numeracy, including the use of technology as a tool to deliver curriculum content. The programme is also data-driven as teachers in the project schools are trained and encouraged to use the Jamaica School Administrative Systems (JSAS) software to input data on their students, to monitor and to evaluate their students' performance.

The aim of the study from the **Gambia** was to examine the strategies used at the study site to promote inclusion. The study mainly focused on the general preparedness of teachers and the school for inclusion. The case study was located in a rapidly growing population where students come from divergent family backgrounds, the majority of whom live on less than a dollar a day, and may be very vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion due mainly to large class size, inappropriate teaching strategies and inadequate resources. The study contends that many students are in school and yet they may be excluded from meaningful participation in their own learning due to poor teaching practices, poor school management, lack of adequate and appropriate teaching and learning resources, or inability by their parents to provide financial and material resources to enhance their learning. This category of students in school and yet excluded are referred to as the 'faces of the unreached'. The study focused on this category of learners.

The **India** case study consists of three distinct attempts in three different states of the country to enhance learning in schools by transforming school functioning – both on managerial and pedagogic aspects. Each of the efforts encompasses a large number of schools and differs significantly in the strategy. The Delhi effort is a system-wide effort essentially initiated by the state government; the effort in Karnataka is a partnership between the state government and a non-government organization; the third case is that of local participatory leadership for change, with active involvement of the community and school authorities, and led by a professional from the local teacher training institution.

The **Côte d'Ivoire** case study is on the project for implementation of inclusive education. The project, entitled 'Projet Ecoles Intégrées' (Integrated Schools Project), focuses on promoting inclusive teaching practices in a bilingual and multi-cultural context mother tongue. The project, which is at the pilot stage, explores four basic hypotheses, namely: (a) teaching in mother tongues is conducive to learning and encourages children to stay in school; (b) pupils are motivated to learn when teachers have an understanding and appreciation of their culture; (c) the literacy of parents (in French or mother tongues) encourages them to send their children to school, promotes academic success, and increases their involvement in school matters; and (d) learning in mother tongues unites children, parents and the community with regard to cultural aspects of the groups in question.

The case study from the **United Republic of Tanzania** attempts to investigate selected local interventions used to enhancing learning in the Singida region. Educational actors' perception on inclusive education is investigated before looking into practical elements of the concept at school and classroom levels. This is significant since the Singida region in the United Republic of Tanzania has a mixture of nomadic pastoralists and diverse ethnic minorities whose education attainment levels, for historical reasons, have remained relatively low. A survey was conducted in three districts namely Iramba, Manyoni and Singida Rural.

## Case study of system-level innovations

Some country reports reviewed in this publication deal with macro-level innovations that have the objective of transforming the system characteristics to facilitate enhanced levels of learning and making the education system more equitable and inclusive.

The short paper from **Bangladesh** deals with a recent policy initiative in the country to use the Primary Education Completion Examination as a tool for monitoring quality of teaching and learning in schools. The paper from **China** elaborates on recent measures taken for making the system more inclusive by reaching basic education facilities to children of traditionally migrant families. Both these innovations from Bangladesh and China, though very generic in nature, have enormous significance as the problems addressed are common to many countries in the region.

Two case studies from **Egypt** deal with national innovations in education, namely the ‘Community Schools Initiative’, which started early in 1992, in three governorates where girls were deprived from going to school. Non-participation of girls has traditionally been attributed to several factors: (a) there were no schools near by; (b) families were against having male teachers to teach their daughters; (c) they preferred to keep their daughters at home to help with household chores; or (d) usually they were married at a very early age. The case studies highlight how these factors have been overcome, and how the strategies adopted have contributed to enhanced learning levels.

The case study from **Jordan** deals specifically with assessing the ‘The Effect of Knowledge Centres (KC) in Enhancing Learning and Teaching with Reference to Knowledge Economy’. The main objective of the educational reform process was to promote student-centred learning, self-learning and lifelong learning. To achieve this goal, curricula content, teaching methods and assessment of students have been developed. Curricula were designed to encourage students to be active and independent learners, where both textbooks and teachers are only resources of learning. The teacher has become a guide, a facilitator and a supporter. Students use a variety of learning resources in addition to the use of information technology, which leads to a balance between skill, knowledge and values. The population of the study consisted of students in nine public schools in five different locations that have KC, along with teachers and subject supervisors of Arabic, English, science and mathematics, and KC coordinators.



## 4. Collating findings: deriving lessons on which to reflect

Achieving the goals of Education for All (EFA) is largely dependent on two interrelated objectives highlighted in the Dakar Declaration. First, school systems have to become more inclusive. All countries have indeed brought more children into school and the world is progressing well on the road to achieving near universal enrolment of children in schools. Yet the task of making schools truly inclusive is not complete. Children for whom schooling still remains elusive are the most marginalized and disadvantaged. Overcoming this barrier is critical for reaching the unreached – whose number is not small, rather quite large in most developing countries. Second, the Dakar Declaration emphasizes not only on bringing all children into the folds of education, but also on ensuring that they receive quality education. The central requirement of this dimension is to significantly enhance learning levels of all children. Thus the perspective is to view quality and equity in a common framework. Starting from early childhood and extending throughout life, learners will require access to high-quality educational opportunities that are responsive to their needs, equitable and gender-sensitive. These opportunities must neither be exclusionary nor discriminatory. Since the pace, style, language and circumstances of learning will never be uniform for all; there should be room for diverse approaches to pursue schooling in a contextualized fashion.

This perspective becomes articulated in the context of several important observations emerging from empirical assessments of the situation across the world. The first observation is that while there has been a steady progress in bringing all children to school, the task is far from complete; in fact, the groups that continue to remain outside the education framework are those belonging to socially and economically marginalized categories. Thus, one of the most fundamental priorities is to devise policies and programme that ensure that children from marginalized categories are enrolled in schools and complete the primary school cycle. A second observation commonly made in many countries is that the schools have to transform themselves into more inclusive institutions that welcome and promote participation of children – without any discrimination in terms of their background and personal conditions. In other words, the physical infrastructure, as well as the contents and processes that constitute schools, have to be more

inclusive to ensure that children belonging to marginalized groups and with special needs are fully integrated into the education system, and benefit equally from the programmes offered. The third observation is that school systems in many countries fail to perform the core task that they are supposed to do, namely, that children learn and acquire basic competencies as envisaged in the curriculum. The issue of quality of learning outcomes is an issue highlighted by the Jomtien Declaration as much as in the Dakar Declaration. However, national and international learner assessment projects have brought the issue into sharper focus, demanding more effective strategies to improve the quality of learning taking place in schools. In fact, from the right perspective, it is argued that ‘learning’, not merely ‘school participation’, should be considered as the basic right of every child. The relevant clauses in the CRC or the goal related to education in MDGs should be appropriately reinterpreted. Further, a citizenry with enhanced levels of learning, even with an extension of the basic cycle of education, is being viewed in many countries as an imperative prerequisite to achieving overall growth and development in the emerging knowledge-centred world. What would make these observations not mere rhetoric but also of direct practical value in transforming schools and school systems? Even while there are no direct and generalized answers to this question, empirical experiences reviewed through case studies in the publication demonstrate that it is possible to bring about significant improvement in the situation, even if we cannot completely resolve all the problems. This chapter attempts to collate ideas and messages that emerge from an analysis of various case studies.

## **Enhancing quality and making the system more inclusive**

This has to be addressed at two levels – one at the macro-systemic level and the other at the educational institution level, or more specifically at school level. Thus, one set of efforts would focus on remedial measures/schemes and programmes that promote participation of the traditionally marginalized groups – the measures that remove the barriers – targeted at specific social or linguistic groups, groups with special needs and so on. It has to be recognized that exclusion from education is not a short-term phenomenon linked to the way the school system is organized. Rather, the current state of inequality in the system, which tends to exclude certain categories of persons, is a historical legacy inherited by many societies in the developing world. Reforming such a situation is a major task requiring sustained efforts on all fronts. For instance, the change required is not merely confined to improving infrastructure and other inputs. It depends even more significantly on changing contents and processes of education on the one hand, and of reorienting the mindsets of people involved in organizing and imparting education on the other. Such a transformative agenda of making education inclusive demands the second set of changes that are to be brought into the institutions engaged in imparting education, namely, schools. Historically, schools have been modelled and structured to address relatively homogeneous groups of children through standardized organizational arrangements, contents and processes. Making such classrooms inclusive implies accepting and responding to diversity in classroom processes. This obviously requires large-scale reforms and adaptations in the way schools are organized and managed impacting all aspects of schooling. Most importantly, it demands redefining the roles and responsibilities of teachers, the relationship between students and teachers, and a re-examination of the ways in which classroom transaction is organized.

## Promoting inclusive policies and programmes

Having recognized that quality and equity are interlinked, it becomes even more important that EFA initiatives actively promote policies and programmes that make the education system more inclusive. There is no standard procedure to make this happen. Nevertheless, the case studies reviewed here indicate certain important principles to follow. An important message that clearly emerges is the need for a better understanding of inclusion, and adopting a new set of values in assessing and promoting quality of school education – values that hold accommodation, non-discrimination and equal treatment of all children irrespective of their social extraction or specific capabilities. In an inclusive perspective, educational difficulties are not attributed mainly to the individual (his/her competencies, social background, the cultural capital of his/her family), but to the school and the education system. The students' progress does not depend only on students' personal characteristics, but on the type of opportunities and support they are (or are not) given, so that the same student can experience learning and participation difficulties in one school or education programme and not in others. In order to operationalize this perspective, Chile adopted an 'Index of Inclusion' to assess if local school systems and schools follow certain basic principles in organizing and assessing their effectiveness.

The Index conceives inclusion as a series of processes aimed at eliminating or minimizing the barriers that limit the learning and participation of all students. To explore exclusion and inclusion, the Index establishes three interrelated dimensions in the life of schools: culture, policies and practices.

1. The first dimension, creating inclusive cultures, corresponds to the development of a welcoming and collaborative community where inclusive values prevail and are shared by all the members of the community, and are also transmitted to new members in school. The principles stemming from this culture guide decisions and daily activities at school.
2. The second dimension is producing inclusive policies. This involves situating inclusion at the core of school development, establishing the necessary support systems to provide an appropriate response to the needs of all students.
3. Evolving inclusive practices is the third dimension established in the Index. It refers to classroom and extra-curricular activities that promote participation and learning in all students. The practices dimension encompasses the space in which teaching and support systems integrate to orchestrate learning for all [Chile].

Education is, first and foremost, a human right of learning how to live, which implies to equip each child, teenager and youth with means and fundamental notions that enable him or her to understand the surrounding world and to behave as a responsible individual (Angola). This in turn demands that all stakeholders develop faith in the educability of all children irrespective of their social background or physical characteristics.

The fact that *any child can and wishes to learn* is the basic article of faith of those responsible for the Mons-en-Baroeul experiment. This would appear to be a self-evident proposition, to which most schools and educationalists worldwide formally subscribe but not necessarily follow in practice [France].

When one extends this principle to the school-level practice, it demands a fundamental shift in our understanding of and expectation from schooling. Quality of schooling cannot be considered as reflected solely in the learning achievement levels of children, or the position the school occupies in the league table of external examination results.

As a rule, the best school is not the one with best academic results in national exams but the one where children feel well and safe and where understanding of what is good or bad is linked to what parents as the first teachers have induced. CER is a particularly popular school for its individual approach to children and its aim to identify and shape talents in every child [Estonia].

## **Making schools inclusive**

Inclusive schools and classrooms are by definition diverse in terms of student population, while the traditional age-grade arrangement expects variety only as a matter of exception. This willing accommodation of children with varying abilities and socio-psychological characteristics demands a new perspective in dealing with learners and the teaching-learning process. Successful inclusive schools tend to attend to this factor in a serious fashion.

This area of favouring academic achievement for everyone is precisely one of the school's fortes: a clear objective shared by all the educational participants; a collaborative and coordinated management to support the teachers in their endeavours with the students, concern for finding alternative and extraordinary actions that will favour learning by certain students (such as the sign language classes for all teachers). In this respect, although the institution does not explicitly espouse inclusion, it has discovered that the best way to promote learning is by developing this type of practice, which could be deemed to be *inclusive*. It is due to these practices that the school appears to be a good municipal school [Tocanao, Chile].

It is needless to state that one of the reasons for exclusion from schooling is low achievement levels. In other words, the way schools address the issue of children at the lower end of the learning curve is critical for promoting inclusion. Inclusive schools do not abandon children who exhibit relative disinterest in scholastic activities. This is evident from all the case studies under review.

Schools arranged special lessons for low-achievement students called 'reinforcement lessons' taught by specialized teachers of learning difficulties in order to help them overcome learning difficulties and to ensure that learning deficiencies did not lead to more physiological pressure, that could in return lead to worries and feeling incompetent among other students. This is important as such feelings of deficiency would have a negative impact on the students' desire to learn, leading to absenteeism and eventual dropout from the school. Students with learning difficulties are given special attention according to a well laid-out pedagogic framework; each subject teacher identifies such students and refers them to teachers of learning difficulties who defines the type of difficulties that student has, reasons that might be due to environmental-personal factors. . . . The teacher sets a suitable remedial plan and main skills activities, such as reading, writing and maths in lessons taken from class lessons; then those students are combined with their colleagues in regular class lessons. These lessons perform an important role in transforming some children with learning difficulties into average performance students or high performance ones [Oman].

Students with differential abilities have ceased to be objects of curiosity or testing and are seen as ordinary classmates; other children simply learn how to treat and communicate with these children. For instance the sighted children always give way to the blind in the corridors or on the stairs, even in the midst of merry frolicking. In fact, a thought provoking aspect has arisen in the course of operating the support system: the better and smoother the support system, the closer the contact between the assistant teacher and the student, the less keen are the blind to create and seek social contact with fellow students. While the assistant teacher's institution was still new, the classmates had to offer help more often and that enabled the creation of friendships more easily... The *support persons system* proved necessary because taking direct action often bears no results; caring, providing personal support and advice are more important. The majority of support activities were undertaken by volunteers, i.e. students, teachers and parents. The underpinning idea was that in an environment that is caring and helps dignity, every person has an opportunity to support someone else and be assured that help was available when in need themselves [Estonia].

## Addressing factors contributing to exclusion

The studies under review highlight several critical factors that hinder effective participation of children in basic education. Even though these are illustrations from specific country or school contexts, one finds a similar situation prevailing in many countries. One of the factors is the perceived alienation between the school and the cultural contexts of the children. This is often identified as a factor contributing to apathy and disinterest among children in rural multi-ethnic contexts, eventually leading to their leaving school prematurely. However, with globalization and increased mobility of people from different socio-economic backgrounds, multicultural contexts are equally visible in urban school settings. Goals of inclusion and enhanced learning demands schools and school systems to adapt to these variations among children in their pedagogy as well as organization, instead of expecting children to adopt standardized school practices. This is well illustrated by the effort made in the Concorde School in France.

On the question of cultural exclusion, in the case of the Concorde School there is a genuine effort to *value the children's culture in its own right*, meaning popular culture and its points of reference, which are in fact often hidden and not accepted in the classroom. As Maria Pagoni has written,<sup>15</sup> 'opening up the school to this culture radically transforms the elitist conception of knowledge as the instrument whereby power is exercised by the privileged social classes'. This means that distressed children are not isolated or given special 'treatment', but the aim is rather to cater for them without singling them out in the collective learning process. Results: pupils acting with confidence on the basis of a rule of law grounded in their own co-operative efforts [France].

Development in its wake has brought with it migration of families in search of better economic opportunities. This is true not only in the fast-growing economies of China and India, but is also a common feature among almost all developing countries. As families keep moving perpetually or temporarily, or in several cases periodically, every year in specific seasons in search of jobs and livelihood, education of children becomes a major victim. The traditional arrangement of building schools and appointing teachers for stable population settlements is rendered totally inadequate to meet the needs of such migratory population groups. This indeed has been

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<sup>15</sup> Maria Pagoni, 'Autorité Educative, Savoir, Socialisation Démocratique', in Colloque CERFEE, IUFM de Montpellier, 2006.

engaging the minds of educational planners. Though these are too country or local specific and defy any generalized strategies, examples of policies and programmes adopted in selected countries could hold lessons for others to reflect on. China, for instance, has initiated several measures facing a major problem in providing basic education to children of migrant populations.

The issue of migrant children and their education comes as a natural consequence of economic development in China. As is the case in many other countries, the low price of agricultural products and the attraction of economic activities in the cities have led to migration of people to the cities... In 2003, the central government announced a rather comprehensive policy on the schooling of migrant children. It stipulated that 'the hosting cities should be the main provider of schooling for migrant children' and 'public schools should be the main provider of education for migrant children'... Migrant children in cities are but one side of the story. The other major problem is the children 'left behind' by parents who have moved to work in cities... Discussions on the problem of educational deprivation of left-behind children have aroused a whole tide of social campaign in China, and have given rise to the emergence of new social concepts.

Overall, the migrant children, both those who are residential in cities and those left behind in rural areas, have attracted much attention from the government, the legislators, as well as society at large. This is perhaps a very significant sign that compulsory education is no longer seen as a pure matter of schooling. It is a significant move away from the traditional values of education for competition and social mobility, and hence education is given its own meaning [China].

The United Republic of Tanzania also reports the efforts made by the government to reach basic education to deprived groups of a similar kind. But in this case, the groups have not migrated from rural areas to cities as part of the industrialization and economic growth processes. Rather the case is of specific groups that are traditionally nomadic ethnic groups, and the problem their children face in accessing basic education.

The districts with a high population of nomadic Maasai registered poor attendance of teachers and pupils on the first week of school opening, ranging from 24 percent to 64 percent respectively. One of the reasons given was that the nomadic cattle herders are sometimes away in mountain areas (very far away from schools) looking for greener pastures. As a result, children lacked parental support to attend school. In some cases, parents were late in purchasing school uniforms, whereas others use the children as cattle headers – a problem that was currently resolved among the Maasai group. It was agreed between the District Team, in close collaboration with the nomadic people, that temporary cattle-herding camps be introduced. This approach made it possible to locate the nomadic group and their children and enhance communication between the Team and concerned parents on educational issues such as schools' opening days and requirements [The United Republic of Tanzania].

As noted earlier, neither the problem of rural–urban migration nor of traditionally nomadic groups is typical of only China and the United Republic of Tanzania. This is a common feature observable in many developing countries. For instance, a large population in India migrates to far off places in specific seasons in search of labour and livelihood. Typical cases are that of labour migration to sugar-cane harvesting areas, brick kilns and salt pans. Some state governments have

made efforts to deal with the situation, but the problem is of such large magnitude that many children continue to remain excluded from basic education.<sup>16</sup>

Many developing countries also face serious issues with respect to the language of teaching in the school and mother tongue. Studies have invariably shown that it is best for children at least at the basic education stage to learn through their mother tongue or the language that is commonly spoken in the community. The issue, of course, remains unsettled as it also has political overtones in many countries. Nevertheless, the case study from Côte d'Ivoire clearly points to the significant value of teaching through the mother tongue, not only for enhancing learning levels, but also in improving the efficiency of the school system by reducing dropout and repetition rates.

The results of our study have shown that learners obtain better results when they understand the teaching language. In other words, the use of mother tongues as teaching languages in the first three years of schooling has a favourable impact on the academic success of pupils. Moreover, by integrating the school into the community and taking account of cultural aspects, pupils are motivated to stay at school and learn well. This dramatically reduces dropout and repetition rates. It also encourages parents to send their children to school. These efforts are accompanied by training of local pedagogical counsellors and primary school inspectors to provide educational mentoring and supervision for teachers; support teaching in mother tongues by providing pupils and teachers with appropriate educational and teaching materials in sufficient quantities; conduct research on meta-language in the teaching of Ivorian national languages; organize in-service training seminars for teachers and educational supervisors; and introduce training modules on teaching in mother tongue in teacher training colleges [Côte d'Ivoire].

## **Factors promoting or hindering learning in schools**

It is well established that a large proportion of children who attend the schools and even complete the full cycle of basic education remain practically illiterate due to several factors within the school, even though normally such failure to learn is attributed to the children. In fact, if our intention is to reach the goal of 'learning for all', it is imperative that the school systems stop blaming children. Rather, schools have to identify factors that hinder effective learning and apply corrective actions. Again most of such actions will have to be locally determined in the school and the surrounding environment. However, the case studies have brought out several significant issues that need consideration in all contexts.

As the study from France highlights, it demands a change of the mindset among all stakeholders; a mindset that has faith in the educability of all children irrespective of their social affiliations or physical characteristics. It is such a faith that marked the success of the school studies in France, which involved a long-term collective commitment to combat the inevitability of school failure. Specifically it was marked by two factors:

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<sup>16</sup> Smita, *Distress Seasonal Migration and Access to Education*, CREATE India, Pathways to Access Series, NUEPA, New Delhi and University of Sussex, 2008.

1. Teachers at the school do not treat this as a formal proposition, but have taken it seriously. This means in their view *the wish to learn always exists and must be nurtured and that academic success is always possible!*
2. As successful learning by pupils is a non-negotiable goal, any failure on the part of a pupil is unacceptable and entails a collective self-questioning by teachers in the quest for explanations and solutions [France].

While pursuing the goal of ‘learning for all’ with such a basic commitment is critical, it would also be necessary to identify organizational and pedagogic factors that seem to affect learning levels. In fact, a large amount of literature exists on the issue of improving school effectiveness and enhancing learning. The study from the United Republic of Tanzania highlighted some significant factors in this regard.

Among the core issues was the late start of classes/learning after school vacation, low morale among teachers, perpetual pupil absenteeism, lack of supervision of classroom teaching and learning, lack/ineffective assessment and feedback to pupils, and lack of structures for parent and community participation in their children’s education and learning.

It was reported further that the most damaging factor to pupils’ poor performance was the little time they spent on learning. In absolute terms, pupils spent almost 50 per cent of the 199 days annually on learning because of various reasons, especially the late start of teaching when schools began new terms, teacher absenteeism, and engagement of pupils in non-learning activities [The United Republic of Tanzania].

In general, research literature, as well as common administrative observations, places the onus on the teacher for most of these problems. The expectation is that teachers follow up on student attendance and active participation in learning processes, not only in the school, but also after school hours and at home. While no one could deny the important role teachers could play in this regard, the United Republic of Tanzania found a novel way of involving other stakeholders in the form of school teams in these tasks.

The close follow-up by school teams was a factor that motivated most pupils to report to school on the first day of the term, a behaviour which reduced absenteeism and created a friendly school atmosphere. Teachers’ workload on following up pupils was reduced by the tripartite relationships built between parents, ward coordinators and the school committee. Adoption of the ward/village by-laws on pupils’ school attendance is also an important local initiative towards ensuring effective learning, reduced dropouts and improved pupils performance [The United Republic of Tanzania].

Exploring the broad factors that contribute to enhanced quality with equity and inclusion, the study from Angola highlights five requirements that probably hold relevance in many other situations as well.

- a. Capacity-building and training of primary education teachers on inclusive education.
- b. Creation of resource centres at the local level.
- c. Acquisition of didactic materials and specific equipment in specialized areas.
- d. Elimination of architectural barriers in the schools institutions.
- e. Preparation and adaptation of the curricula for the benefit of learners with varying needs [Angola].



## Tests and examinations have a critical role to play – but look beyond marks

Tests and examinations form an integral part of schooling. Children face them while learning in the classroom, at the end of the year for deciding on promotion to higher classes and for admission to courses. Each type and occasion of testing and examination has a specific value in assessing and enhancing learning levels, particularly cognitive outcomes effected through the teaching–learning process in schools. Yet, it is also well known that these can become occasions causing severe stress to children. The studies under review have examined this aspect closely. In particular, they reflect on assessment practices adopted in schools that have succeeded in not only better learning among children, but also promoted a stress-free ambience in the schools, and a culture of co-operative learning. For instance, the case examined in Chile points out:

While students are evaluated prior to admission, the evaluation is performed not for the purpose of determining who will be admitted and who will not, nor for classifying students according to their levels of achievement, but rather to facilitate heterogeneous distribution of the students throughout the various classrooms, fostering diversification [The Colegio Polivalente la Pintana, Chile].

Recognizing the critical role that examinations play, the case study from Bangladesh describes how the Primary Education Completion Examination could be used as a tool for monitoring quality teaching and learning in schools. Specific policy guidelines have been drawn up to streamline the examination; this is making an impact on the processes within the school.

As noted earlier, the teaching–learning process and testing and evaluation of learners have to be seen in an integrated framework. How assessment could help impact learning depends significantly on the way teachers handle the curriculum and teaching in classrooms. The approach adopted by the teachers in the school case from France is quite illustrative of this point:

The teachers at the school do not set aside the national curriculum but rather try to link its content with classroom activities, making adjustments wherever necessary; they believe, however, that they are ‘free to go well beyond the curriculum’ when the pupils’ projects require it; the curriculum and its contents thus conceived are not to be ‘followed’, but rather mastered. . . . At the same time as the school has achieved overall results comparable with those of more favoured schools, the teaching methods employed have enabled it to rescue pupils who would otherwise have been excluded from learning [France].

An important message emerging from this is the need to adequately stress the role of school-based evaluation, or what is traditionally called teacher-made tests in monitoring learning process as well as learning outcomes. Teachers and schools that emphasize periodic evaluation in a child-specific and child-friendly manner seem to achieve better results, as the cases from Estonia and Egypt highlight.

Kadri Mäll, Maarika’s class teacher at the time says that ‘technical equipment isn’t that vital’, most importantly you should seek to understand how to assess, treat or tie the child with the rest of the class [Estonia].

*Teachers’ approach to assessment:* The daily programme of the school enables the facilitators to know their students; their social background, their abilities, intelligences, personality traits,

competencies, styles of learning. They have the opportunity to observe the children and evaluate their behaviour. This model has built within it the use of a child's portfolio [Egypt].

If the transforming of the approach to assessment by teachers in their regular teaching work is so important, why does that not happen? Several studies have focused on the challenges that teachers encounter when they are in the process of implementing new and different assessment practices. Using a long-term case study approach, Lock and Munby<sup>17</sup> investigated the factors that affect the implementation of a new assessment programme. The study focused on how the beliefs and practices of teachers influence the integrating into practice different forms of assessment, such as portfolios and student conferencing. The results point to four sets of factors: (a) beliefs about teaching and learning – evidence indicates that a teacher's beliefs impact classroom practice; (b) understanding new assessment practices – the study showed that an understanding of student-centred assessment methods is critical for any change in classroom practice; (c) contextual influences – the school environment could limit changes in classroom practice; and (d) involvement in research programmes – collaborative research contributes to greater understanding of assessment practices and also helps bridge the gap between educational research and teacher practice. The study also revealed that professional development has little effect if participating teachers are hindered by the context of the teaching environment and by beliefs about teaching and learning.<sup>18</sup>

## **Scholastic learning and the emotional life of children cannot be separated**

This is a clear message that emerges out of analysing all the case studies reviewed here. The issue under consideration is not new. Traditionally, teaching and testing in schools tend to focus mainly if not solely on cognitive outcomes, even though the rhetoric of the all-round development of children continues. This truncated perspective on student participation and learning results in the neglect of the emotional life of the children. Studies are, in fact, unequivocal in emphasizing the need to address the development and learning needs of the children in a holistic manner. More specifically, making schools more inclusive and contributing to student learning demands that they attend to the emotional life of the children as much as they do to cognitive learning outcomes. This demands a shift in the overall belief mission and philosophy of the schools, as reflected in the work of the teachers.

...a true inclusion philosophy should not be based solely on learning or cognitive content. Teachers show that they value and respect student opinions and answers provided in class by actively involving them, with the objective of establishing channels of communication that allow students to express their needs and interests, having their educational needs met and being heard in exchange.

Moreover, classroom work groups must be arranged in such a manner that makes it possible to integrate students who have attained different levels of achievement, distributing them equally so

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<sup>17</sup> C. Lock and H. Munby, 'Changing the Practice of Student Assessment: One Teacher's Challenge', *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2000, pp. 267-279.

<sup>18</sup> See also *Improving Learning through Formative Assessment: Cases, Policies, Research*, OECD Study on Enhancing Learning through Formative Assessment and the Expansion of Teacher Repertoires, Canadian Report, October 2005, OECD, 2005.

that each student feels valued, learning barriers are reduced, and participation by all the students is encouraged [La Pintana, Chile].

As the study from France points out, effective learning demands that *pupils be made to feel secure in the learning process*. This stems from the observation that if pupils are afraid of the risks of learning, they do not learn. If mistakes are not stigmatized, pupil assessment serves to educate and not to sanction; help between pupils, or on the part of teachers, is regular and commonplace. The study further points out that:

The timetable is adapted to individual learning needs, and rituals are also a source of security, providing pupils with signposts. . . . *Each pupil has a personal history and memory of the learning process*: the idea is that a pupil's education is not a rapid succession of school years destined to be forgotten. All the work and work projects, everything bearing witness to what each pupil is doing and has done remains permanently available for a number of years in the school and gives visible form to the learning process. In particular, there is a very close link between work in the infant school (in theory from age 2 to 5 or 6) and in the primary school (in theory from age 5 or 6 to 11), with pupils discovering the same principles in each school [France].

The missing piece in many school programmes is recognition of children's feelings – feelings that may confuse students so that they do not follow directions, continually go off-task, cannot pay attention, or have difficulty working co-operatively. Conversely, feelings may enhance learning, such as when they are regulated to help students to be flexible thinkers, quick problem-solvers, and team players.<sup>19</sup> It has to be recognized that children grow up in different and often difficult circumstances at home, and they turn to the school to provide a sense of security. How the school recognizes this fact and offers an ambience of trust and security is critical for learning to take place. For instance, how do you help a child who primarily needs parental guidance and care, who has recently lost a parent, or whose grandmother, the only carer, has been taken to hospital? Such children look to their schoolmates, the class teacher and other teachers to provide feelings of security.

The aim is to create a caring atmosphere in the school, accepting each student as they are, everybody being demanding towards themselves based on their abilities. This is a way of shaping a student community where everybody feels safe and secure. Thus each student can become an individual who is oriented towards professionalism and creativity, is responsible for himself/herself and others on the basis of a shared value system [Estonia].

## **Home–school partnership to ensure inclusive practices and enhanced levels of learning**

Socialization and even learning of children begins first at home and the community. It is only much later that they begin their formal education in the school. While parents and educators draw distinction between the two, for children school only represents an expanded space for learning beyond home and the neighbourhood. It is in this perspective that the relationship between school

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph E. Zins, Maurice J. Elias, Roger P. Weissberg, Mark T. Greenberg, Norris M. Haynes, Karin S. Frey, Rachael Kessler, Mary E. Schwab-Stone and Timothy P. Shriver, 'Enhancing Learning through Social and Emotional Education', *Think: The Journal of Critical and Creative Thinking*, Vol. 9, October 1998, pp. 18-20.

and parents and the larger community is of critical importance in making school education a pleasant and meaningful experience for children. Further, studies have invariably found that the quality of school functioning benefits enormously from close co-operation between parents, teachers and school authorities. The emergence of parent-teacher associations and school management committees has to be viewed as contributors to promotion of school efficiency and quality in this broader context. It is for this purpose that, as the India study points out, most school transformation strategies call for the establishment of a school management committee for getting systematic input from teachers, parents and from other citizens and students, as well. Further, it is important that the involvement of parents and other stakeholders cannot be merely at the formal level; rather, in order to make an impact on school quality, it has to be a joint effort of the school and community carried out in a voluntary spirit.

Improvement efforts in these schools do not focus on the school as an isolated entity. Establishing effective school-community interface by linking school children and teachers with social issues in the locality is a significant factor. This possibly is a unique phenomenon fully in tune with the voluntary nature of the effort, with no special external prescription. The programme also depends mainly on capacity-building on a voluntary basis by local professionals. Further, contrary to the common perception on official support to innovations, the Lalgudi effort clearly proves that with active community involvement, departmental support and co-operation would also be forthcoming [School Transformation in Lalgudi, India].

In addition, community involvement does not happen merely because PTAs or school management committees are set up. It is necessary to proactively define the role of the community members in specific aspects of school functioning, as it has been highlighted in the study from Gambia, so that parents develop a sense of ownership and pride in the functioning of the school.

The role of the PTA in the school needs to be revisited so that its functions transcend beyond merely helping the administration during the registration of new students. Issues in the home that inhibit learning, such as increasing domestic chores, refusal of parents to support the school on issues related to student behaviour, continuous teacher professional development and a host of other factors militating against effective learning should all fall within the purview of the PTA. It is therefore a necessity to build stronger bonds between the school and homes. One way of building such a strong relationship between the school and the community is to involve the community in the selection of their PTA representative. It is only through a properly representative and truly committed PTA that the school is assured of getting support from such a committee in the areas of discipline, monitoring teaching and learning and other related curricular and extra-curricular activities in the school [Gambia].

Another prerequisite for meaningful collaboration between school and community in enhancing school quality is to build an atmosphere of trust among the parents and the community with respect to the school, its goals, functions and contribution to the development of children. This demands that the traditional distance between teachers and parents is effectively bridged, and the school authorities proactively initiate a variety of moves that would engender positive feelings towards the school among parents and community members. What such moves could be are illustrated by the following excerpts from the case studies reviewed.

To get the community involved in the school, it is crucial to get the teacher into the community dynamics, from the moment of arrival, on the basis of an affectionate and respectful relationship, since this is the only way to gain the community member's confidence, and in which they can commit themselves to the school dynamics. The participation of community members and parents should assist the cultural affirmation; since, more than anyone else, they have accumulated knowledge of their community and are able to significantly contribute to their children's education [Peru].

When the next school year started, we spent the whole first term explaining to the parents what their children were doing in class. Some parents were worried that even though their children enjoyed school, every time they asked them what they were doing at school, the children would answer, 'we are playing all day'! That did not satisfy the parents. We explained to them the concept of learning through play; at the same time we encouraged the students to use the word 'work' instead of 'play'. This helped a lot [Egypt].

Another type of co-operation between school and home is the school's study of skills that parents need; then it organizes training courses for them. [School B] principal said that: 'the school has conducted computer and internet courses for parents to enable them to help their children in using the computer and internet. The school also organized a training course in making incense called "incense aroma" (*Shadha Al Bukhoor*), many mothers working in the incense business trained participants on making this traditional Omani handicraft'. This course had positive financial and moral returns on students and mothers; it also enhanced students' motivation towards school and learning [Oman].

The final goal of the school-community partnership in school management should be to develop such a situation where parents see the school as a preferred and secure place of learning for their children, which cannot be provided at home and cannot be replaced by any other alternative.

A teacher of the Collegium Educationis Revaliae (CER) whose child was studying in the school said: ' . . . I cannot think of any other school for my child to go to since this school is safe both for the child and his family. Besides having friendly classmates and opportunities to take part in a number of hobby groups, I can always be certain that should my child or me have the slightest concern or problem which we are not able to deal with, in this school they'll come to help.' Providing assistance to those in need has underpinned the activities of CER throughout its existence [Estonia].

While no one can undermine the value of building a sound partnership between the school and community it serves, it is necessary to examine its impact on learning improvement efforts within the school, keeping in view the local political and developmental context. The situation varies widely from one place to another within a country, or even within local contexts. As the Indian Study points out, while school management committees or village education committees can become the main body for decision-making with respect to general management issues, questions of academic and professional management may have to be dealt with independently. How much can the community members be involved in academic decision-making? One cannot have a uniform prescription as it depends very much on the profile of the members constituting such management bodies, and the mutual confidence that the teachers and the members of the committee enjoy. Further,

Successful implementation of strategies to improve learning outcomes at the macro level covering all schools with active involvement of the local community in decision-making demands a radical transformation of the organizational culture of the public education management system. Greater involvement of the local community demands that the higher authorities agree to give up certain powers hitherto enjoyed. Also, school control by local stakeholders brings greater pressure on the school authorities to promote transparency and shared perspective with parents. The school authorities cannot merely meet the demands of remotely placed authorities and get away even with low efficiency in school functioning. Accountability to local masters is not something many school authorities are familiar with [India].

## **Creating a productive learning environment in the classroom and the school**

It is axiomatic to state that a productive learning environment in the school leads to or is a prerequisite for enhanced learning levels among students. What does such an environment consist of? It is perhaps impossible to arrive at a set of generic universally applicable characteristics to determine if a school or classroom possesses a productive learning environment. The definition of such an environment has to be, in the final analysis, arrived at locally in a context-specific manner. It is in this context that contextual experiences narrated in the case studies under review become very valuable as guideposts in understanding and adapting practices that make the learning environment in a school or a classroom productive and meaningful to all participants – teachers and students. Even though the experiences quoted below are selective and limited to case studies reviewed, it is important to note that these are identified in the respective contexts, which are successful in creating an environment that promotes equity and quality in teaching-learning.

The Oman study deals with the issue at length, and identifies four sets of factors/actions based on the case studies of schools that contributed to enhancing learning among students.

The two schools studied represented a high-level productive learning environment; having books, stories in the school yard, pictures and instructional charts made students eager to read all these kinds of material; indirectly, it helped them acquire reading skills and self-learning skills. Based on this result, the study recommends the necessity of taking advantage of every school corner in incorporating pieces of information or skill training. By doing that, the school becomes an influential power in enhancing learning and encouraging students to learn.

Practical activities based on self-learning attract students a lot and they interact with it more than in other informative theoretical activities. Based on this result, the study recommends giving more attention to schools, teachers, curricular and to practical activities which is highly emphasized by educational researches' call for learning through work and practice.

Classrooms at both schools are filled with various learning materials that motivate students indirectly to self-learning. In addition to activities undertaken by students and displayed around the classroom, other stimulating activities were displayed in the class: for example, a magnetic letters chart where students enjoy forming various words. A learning centre in the corner of each classroom is another example of resources that encourage students to self-learning as students can use these centres to get information and knowledge in a self-directed spontaneous manner.

The study recommends the necessity of concentrating training courses on the above-mentioned factors; senior teachers co-operate with supervisors in defining difficulties faced by teachers in using these strategies; then conducting school workshops in each aspect. . . . Before executing these procedures, teachers must believe that co-operative learning is a powerful means to help students for self learning in co-operation with group mates, as well as in creating a positive competing spirit among group members to achieve superiority over other groups [Oman].

The study from France reinforces this point on the need for providing greater space and time in classroom processes for promoting co-operative and reflective learning among students and teachers. There is a tendency for teachers to compartmentalize excessively the tasks assigned to pupils, transforming an exercise into a succession of 'micro-activities'; pupils, 'not being confronted by a real problem' to solve in its totality are not likely to be able to construct a body of knowledge or skills. Also, there is excessive individualization of learning. There is little time for group exchanges to discuss what is to be done or what has to be learnt; few or no moments of collective synthesis after the performance of individual tasks. On the other hand, teachers keep a close watch on their pupils, intervening very quickly to correct any mistake, not 'allowing pupils', individually or collectively, 'the time to discuss a possible solution'. With these characteristics of traditional classrooms in view, the study from France highlights the following about a successful school that makes students the centre of focus in designing and implementing learning activities.

An essential point is that *pupils learn by doing*: 'doing' involves a commitment by the pupils, who, because they are active, are engaged in the learning process... At the same time as it is centred on each pupil, *learning takes place in a dialectic and collective context*: the classroom is a place for work, group discussions and co-operation, each pupil benefiting in terms of learning from this interaction with the group [France].

These illustrations signify not only the importance but also the clear possibility of making classroom experience productive for all children. In this regard, the case studies from Egypt draw up some ground rules that could enhance the participation of children in learning and thereby enhance learning outcomes. The study, taking the example of community schools, point out that such an effort can be made even in moderately endowed schools by adopting child-centred classroom organization.

Classroom practices and management styles are two significant areas where principles of quality learning are portrayed: (a) classroom is considered the social space where significant socialization and transformation of children's personality takes place; (b) very simple practices inside the classroom could lay the foundation for new ways in which all parties could relate to each other – practices that reflect a sense of mutual trust and security allowing for respect and co-operation; (c) the practices are learner-centred and activity-based. Most practices are centred on emotional intelligence and caring is a very strong emotion that is encouraged daily in the schools; (d) many practices emphasize practical life skills needed in the school and at home; and (e) practices show the importance of values and ethics, as well as contemporary issues like child rights, gender, environment care, peace education, conflict resolution, and accepting differences [Egypt].

Classroom organization is critical. As we described before, the community school is a very modest building made of local materials. It has no fence. The toilet is outside the building. It consists of one room, furnished with very simple but functional furniture, which is sufficient for conducting the desired activities during learning time. But the strength of the school lies in

classroom organization. The classroom has stable learning corners or centres. They usually are: language corner, arithmetic, art, general knowledge and science. In some cases, a quiet reflective corner for catching up on missed activities.

This set-up helps in adopting several child-centred activities and practices: Students are made responsible for their learning; students understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what exactly is needed from them; students have a wide opportunity to make choices and express their ideas and opinion; the teacher working as a facilitator of learning also enjoys greater freedom to be creative in his/her work; school leaders were supportive of new innovations as they contributed to a productive learning atmosphere; efforts of children tended to be appreciated and rewarded; students enjoyed learning [Egypt].

Adopting such practices would also require changing classroom organization and equipping schools with adequate learning materials as well as facilities for self-exploration and learning by students. It is with this in view that Jordan has adopted a programme of establishing knowledge centres in every school that caters to the needs of all students and teachers.

*Knowledge centres:* An active learning environment for interactive learning and teaching where facilities meet students' and teachers' needs, such as computers, encyclopaedias, scientific books, and audio-visual materials in place within the school library, which provides opportunities for teacher-student interaction [Jordan].

While these illustrations from different countries are quite impressive, the general impression of schools in many developing countries is that of uninteresting monotonous places which do not motivate children to learn or the teachers to engage in innovative methods and approaches. How do we achieve the transformation of such schools into vibrant organizations that attract and motivate learners and also promote teachers to engage in innovative child-friendly activities that contribute to enhanced learning outcomes? There is no standard model that can be prescribed for all situations. However, it is clear that achieving such transformation may require external prodding and guiding of the stakeholders within the school. The Indian study illustrates this with two distinct approaches of successfully transforming schools into productive learning organizations. A feature, common to both approaches, is the voluntary involvement of the schools and schools systems to transform themselves. Perhaps, without such self-motivation on the part of the school, mere external efforts could not have yielded positive results.

*Local professional leadership triggers change in schools in Lalgudi:* 'Send your children to us for five years. We will guarantee their education and good conduct', proclaimed a signboard that was put up in 1999 at the Koppavali Elementary School. A bold commitment indeed, coming as it does from a government school functioning in a rural locality. That was the beginning of a 'Voluntary School Improvement Movement' in a remote corner of Tamil Nadu. Within two years, the programme spread to the whole *panchayat* union [local administrative area] in the Lalgudi block covering 94 state run schools, involving 460 teachers and around 17,000 children [India].

*Incentive for change helps in transforming schools.* To sum up, the initiative is built on the principal belief that an urge for development has to come from within. In the final analysis, solutions to problems of learning standards can come only through the efforts and commitment of the local stakeholders. Keeping this in view, the programme invites schools to achieve higher levels of performance as per preset goals and targets. The schools which succeed in their efforts receive rewards in terms of developmental support to the institution. The programme encourages



the schools' voluntary commitment and systematic planning in a collective fashion to achieve preset goals in learning levels. Thus, it is a self-propelling model as the external support that flows in the form of rewards for performance are only towards improving the learning conditions in the school [India].

## **The teacher is the central actor**

In the traditional school management framework, education authorities, as well as schoolteachers and even community members, are used to viewing the teacher only as a recipient individual, implementing the decisions made at a higher level for the larger system. Systematic implementation of an agenda for school transformation that aims to make the schools inclusive and promote programmes for enhancement of learning for all requires a total change in this perspective. It demands that teachers become central figures, designing and implementing a transformative agenda that is contextually evolved in a collaborative fashion involving all stakeholders. How would this change in perspective be introduced? The case studies reviewed here amply highlight this critical importance of teachers in achieving the goal of inclusive schooling – leading to learning for all. For instance, the centrality of the teacher in adapting school instruction to suit the needs of linguistically diverse groups of children is effectively articulated in the following excerpt from the case studies from Peru and France:

Generating culturally relevant and meaningful learning processes involves changes in concepts and attitudes in teachers. On a conceptual level, it supposes new philosophical and theoretical comprehension about education as a social process that originates from the community's needs, interests and aspirations. With regards to attitude, it is assumed that the teacher will become involved as a Quechua teacher, who assumes and recognizes to be a person with an Andean past and cultural matrix and, from this acceptance, changes the teaching practices in the classroom and community... The teacher's integration into the community dynamics is vital since it forces him or her to change the school and make the place welcoming and loving, where the community has the chance to regenerate [Peru].

One also finds that while working-class families are sometimes stigmatized by education authorities as 'lacking in ambition' for their children, most school staff themselves tend to be fatalistic and to exaggerate in their minds the impact on their pupils of economic and social conditioning, not realizing that in some contexts groups of teachers have been able to achieve results in spite of the social environment, and that there is therefore a 'teacher effect', just as there is doubtless an 'institution effect'. The teachers playing the leading role in the experiment described here do not indeed subscribe to this fatalistic attitude [France].

The critical role that teachers can play is also highlighted in the study from Egypt. In fact, it demonstrates that even a single teacher can make a significant difference to school life. This is important as often many teachers and authorities assert that the problem essentially lies with the ubiquitous system; there is not much point in individual teachers becoming innovative while the system remains unchanged.

One major practice she applied was to teach the same students for two consecutive years. This allowed her to know her students (their learning styles – their kinds of intelligences – their attitudes toward the subject – their social habits – and a lot about their personal life). Such information helped the teacher to notice any changes (good or bad) that are taking place in the

student's lives.... The results were significant: the level of achievement improved for all students, two students who were suffering from personal family problems and were about to drop out of school regained their self-esteem and their will to continue their education [Egypt].

This recognition of the role of the teacher in making schools more effective and inclusive is not new. One comes across plenty of such assertions in almost all discourses on improving or reforming school education. So, what hinders teachers from taking on such a role? Is it merely the attitude as indicated above, or are there other factors that contribute to such a state of affairs?

It is clear from the findings of the study, and from consultation with parties involved in the study that the major cause that hinders the improvement of learning is the lack of trained and skilled education professionals that are the transmitters of knowledge and the promoters of quality.

The study shows the importance of trained and skilled teachers in transmitting knowledge and promoting quality, based on the results, the study also came up with some suggestions and recommendations, the most important of which are:

1. Continuous work to improve the capacity of teachers in various areas that are related to the enhancement of learning in order to be up to date with the educational requirements of the new millennium.
2. Follow up in the field of the application of the standards of quality in various educational institutions in order to control the improvement of learning in and outside school.
3. To apply the scientific method in order to define the standards that will be used to measure the improvement in all stages of learning [Morocco].

On similar lines, all the case studies point to the need for further strengthening of capacity-building of teachers. This, again, is not a new agenda. All education development documents and studies emphasize this need. The studies show that routine and standardized training inputs do not make the desired impact on the teaching behaviour of teachers and other stakeholders. To succeed in transforming the schools and classrooms, it demands better planning and more attention to details, not only in designing and implementing capacity-building activities, but also in following up on the needs of teachers as they begin to practice new pedagogies in schools. The following excerpts from the case studies under review illustrate this point.

Teacher incompetence and behaviour is also a factor re-reinforcing exclusion in the school. The teachers observed have all undergone the required teacher training programme. Yet, their teaching methods beg the question as to whether they would require some form of re-training on child-centred pedagogies to improve on their teaching. The study shows that there is no team planning and teachers tend to do things on their own, albeit with little supervision. If supervision were as rigorous as required, lack of use of instructional materials, lecture methods in teaching and a host of other ill-conceived teaching methods that serve the interest of few students would have been spotted and redressed [Gambia].

To introduce active learning as a teaching-learning practice in (NSP) schools, the EDC staff designed and implemented a six-day long seminar on different teaching strategies, including active learning. In order to provide ongoing support for the teachers as they return to their classrooms, the project offered follow-up sessions to provide technical assistance to the teachers [Egypt].

One of the powerful elements in the success of the community schools initiative in Egypt is the well planned and well implemented training programme. Major characteristics of this pedagogy are that it is based on teamwork and participation, is activity-based, and is amenable to evaluation. Training takes place on several levels and for different purposes [Egypt].

Another point implicitly brought out by the case studies is that schools are complex organizations. Their work is influenced by multiple actors and agencies inside and outside the school. Sustainable gains in transforming the school culture and outcomes become possible only with a collaborative effort of all concerned. Capacity-building programmes have to recognize this larger reality.

Among these were teachers, as well as education officers, participating in a process-based research into effective schools. This opportunity opened up a new understanding by the teachers, as well as the district and ward education teams, on school and classroom factors that influenced learning, hence an emergence of shared concern and vision on the magnitude of the pupils' poor performance [The United Republic of Tanzania].

The collaborative intervention to enhancing learning involving the regional, district, village and ward officers removed administrative bureaucratic barriers through more positive working relationships. The community, as well as the teachers, felt more confident to contribute knowledge on how learning could be improved. This participatory approach, unlike the past when interventions could fall to school from top education officers, created friendly school and working environments [The United Republic of Tanzania].

The case studies also point out that merely the training of teachers by resource persons may not yield desired results. They need support material and ongoing inputs while they work in schools.

As for the teacher, it is difficult to develop students' independent and critical thinking if the teacher is the only resource of knowledge and does not have a variety of alternative sources of information. The teacher needs all the assistance and support for a more active role in preparing, planning for teaching, using varied and appropriate resources, creating and developing materials and sharing them with other teachers. Thus, an active knowledge centre is an important factor in developing the role of both teacher and student [Jordan].

Developing two educational kits to enhance active learning: Teachers were trained on the use of the kits in an integrated way with the usual teaching methods used. Parts of the kits were to be used for small groups, some for individual students, and others for the whole class. . . . The kits proved to be an excellent practice to enhance active learning and good quality teaching. They were used extensively by all teachers, and students enjoyed using them [Egypt].

There is also the need to evolve a proper system of teacher appraisal and incentive systems. In most school systems, there are no systematic institutional mechanisms to differentiate between effective and committed teachers from others. School systems do not follow the basic principle of incentivizing good work. The case study from Oman points out how the particular school under study could overcome this lacuna.

The school appreciates teachers' efforts in many ways: teachers are evaluated weekly through a 'Teacher's Innovativeness, Creativity and Ambitious Thinking Chart', in many aspects – such as adherence to regular attendance, creativity in activities, participation in school activities, etc.

Evaluation is done by placing a star on each aspect opposite the names of distinguished teachers, and every month a teacher is selected to be honoured on school occasions, such as ‘Teachers Day’ and ‘National Day’. A copy of the certificate is then hung on another chart at the school entrance; this is called the ‘Distinguished Teachers Evaluation Chart’, which attracts visitors – especially parents who are pleased to see the teacher of their child as one of those Distinguished Teachers. . . . This kind of enhancement is reflected positively on teacher performance, further on student performance [Oman Study].

## **Actions have to be school specific**

Schools and classrooms across the world have many things in common. Solutions to problems of inclusion and learning can indeed be designed based on good diagnosis of systems across the countries and on sound theoretical principles. Yet, when it comes to actual implementation of successful elements, it is imperative that actions have to be crafted, based on the uniqueness of individual schools and local circumstances. This is another aspect demonstrated by the case studies.

Learning enhancement requires drawing up a well-crafted plan that should spring from an accurate diagnosis of the conditions of educational institutions, in accordance with accurate and meaningful criteria and indicators, in such a way that there is a harmonious and coherent complementarity between all roles and operations of management, governance, teaching assessment and openness to the environment with a view to deducing practical solutions conducive to better educational performance. This is through (a) effectively deploying resources and assets, and (b) activating inter-educational institutions’ competitiveness and its openness to life, in order to achieve direct and positive impact upon the school performance, learning and the acquisition of the skills and competencies necessary for the achievement of better quality learning [Morocco].

The case studies reviewed here also highlight how such individualized actions specially designed to meet the needs and problems of local contexts and school requirements have benefited the school and the students.

Many of the graduates of the programme have opted to further their studies because of the high level of motivation inculcated in them by the design of the programme, the caring attitude of the staff, and the award of scholarships. The programme has been successful in turning around disadvantaged youth so that they become positive contributors to society [SERVOL Hi-Tech Centres, Caribe].

The following principles were followed when working with Mati (a child with special needs). Studies follow the individual curriculum (IC); its preparation and introduction was advised by special education teachers from the Ristiku Basic School in Tallinn (this school teaches children with special educational needs, e.g. learning difficulties). The IC provides assessment criteria that enable the boy to obtain positive and motivating grades for his work. The study process follows the advice of the speech therapist and special education teachers; there are many visual aids (charts and figures), pictures, the computer for visualization, semantics of words, analysis of textual tasks and learning their types, and finally developing reading and speaking skills and spelling. Individual classes ensure active participation in the study process; the boy has to frequently read, write, retell, write and discuss, and thus can put the acquired knowledge into

active use. The teacher also asks him to speak in a loud voice and clearly articulate words. This programme takes into consideration the boy's fatigue within the class, day or week, and breaks for rest can be offered when needed. He also needs lots of praise to retain his interest in learning and achievement [Estonia].

## 5. Conclusion

The world has, undoubtedly, witnessed an unprecedented expansion of basic education facilities; more schools and classrooms have been built; more children have been enrolled. It would not be wrong to say that people, particularly the poor and the marginalized, view education as the main means of their upliftment in the fast changing world of knowledge and globalization. However, the task of providing quality education for all is far from over. There is a tremendous groundswell in all communities to obtain basic education for their children. In fact, the remainder of the task is even more challenging than the earlier phase. It is important that the education system responds to this increased expectation, and aspiration among people is not belied. The subsequent actions cannot be designed based on generic understanding of organizing good education systems. In fact, the focus of action now has to shift to individual schools, and the processes that take place therein. The shift of focus has to be on imbuing in every school a missionary zeal to aim at equity with quality – inclusion with enhanced learning. The goal, in this perspective, will be to ensure that ‘every school improves and every child succeeds’. The research analysis has to be moved from designing generic principles to generation of knowledge and skills that are contextual, school specific and child-centred. The value of the case studies reviewed here lies in this. They do not offer universal solutions that can be prescribed across the board. Instead, they attempt to capture the nuances involved in improving schools, making them inclusive and ensuring enhanced levels of learning. They present and mirror the daily life problems in achieving the goal of providing quality education for all. They also present (based on real life experience) nuanced, feasible and contextually relevant ways and means of addressing the problems and issues related to transforming the prevalent practices, to move towards the goal of quality EFA, as a collaborative venture of all concerned stakeholders.

In implementing such a transformative agenda of ‘every school excels and every child succeeds’, the role of the school itself comes out as critical. Successful transformation demands solutions being designed from within, involving all concerned. External prescriptions can help only up to a certain level, particularly in ensuring the necessary condition – but this is not easy. In the traditional management framework, the education authorities, as well as the school teachers and even the community members, are used to viewing school only as a recipient body, implementing the decisions made for the larger system. Systematic implementation of an agenda for school

transformation involving inclusion and enhanced learning as twin goals requires increased levels of self-management by local stakeholders, and total change in this perspective of fatalistically accepting limitations and external prescriptions. But, how would this change be brought in? This throws a major challenge, as school management from this perspective requires a new set of skills and attitude among all the stakeholders. Are the traditional programmes of in-service education of headmasters and school teachers geared to meet this challenge? These are important questions that need to be tackled. In fact, school transformation agenda brings a new group of clientele to the forefront in the process of capacity-building for self-management of schools, namely, community members. It is often felt that the community members in many cases are totally unprepared (illiterate, lacking capability and even willingness) to take on the task of managing school development. Thrusting this responsibility on them without corresponding facilities for skill-building may, no doubt, further jeopardize the interests of the school instead of improving its efficiency and quality. It is not easy to resolve the issue. While one cannot undermine the need for building necessary understanding and skills among school authorities and community members, it is difficult to justify any move against empowerment of local stakeholders, inside and outside the school, for school development tasks, on the ground of lack of capacity. Such a move would inherently be inimical to the very foundation of providing quality education for all in an inclusive manner. Efforts to making school management participatory and consultative, involving parents and other stakeholders, has to continue if the goal of making schools inclusive and ensure enhanced levels of learning outcomes from schooling.

## 5. List of case studies reviewed

1. Study of Education Policies, Programme and Legislations in Angola.
2. Reform of Examination in Bangladesh.
3. Education of Migrant Children in China.
4. Enhancing Learning in the English Speaking Caribbean: The Experience of Three Educational Programmes.
5. Inclusive Education to Improve Learning for All: Two Case Studies in Chile.
6. Best Practices That Enhance Quality Learning: Case Studies from Egypt.
7. Saving through School – Collegium Educationis Revaliae and St. Michael's Society: Case Study on Inclusive Education (Estonia).
8. Case Study of Improved Educational Attainment in a French School in Difficult Social Surroundings.
9. Case Study on Inclusive Education in the Gambia: Exploration of Inclusive Education in Old Yundum Upper Basic School.
10. Raising Learning Levels through Transformation of School-based Processes: Reflections on some Indian Experiences.
11. Research Report from Côte d'Ivoire.
12. An Evaluative Study: The Effect of Knowledge Centres in Enhancing Learning and Teaching with Reference to Knowledge Economy (Jordan).
13. Factors and Requirements of the Learning Enhancement Inside and Outside the School: Research Report from Morocco.
14. Case Study on Inclusive Education and Enhancing Learning in the Sultanate of Oman.
15. Learning to Read and Write from Andean Knowledge: The Case of Paropata School in Peru.
16. Inclusive Education: Theory and Practice from Educators' Perspectives in Tanzania.